

Employee
Assistance
Program

Living Healthy Working Well

*A monthly newsletter distributed to
State of California EAP Coordinators*

Q&A Commonly Asked Questions & Answers About the State of California EAP

For five years, Merit Behavioral Care of California (MBC) has been pleased to provide Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services for the 181,000 State of California employees. As part of the State of California's commitment to promoting the health and well-being of its employees, the Department of Personnel Administration contracts with MBC to offer eligible employees and dependents access to a comprehensive EAP. Through the EAP, thousands of State of California employees and their dependents have received help with their personal and work-related concerns. To help you fully understand your valuable EAP benefit, we have devoted this month's newsletter to addressing some of the common questions and issues voiced by you, the State of California employee.

Q. What services are offered through the EAP?

A. The State of California EAP is an assessment and counseling service designed to provide you and your family with assistance in managing everyday concerns. Through the EAP, you can get help addressing problems such as relationship difficulties, problems with alcohol or drugs, or feelings of depression. You can also receive consultation on legal matters, as well as referrals to community resources for help with financial concerns, child care and elder care issues.

Q. Are EAP services really confidential?

A. All EAP records and services are treated with the strictest confidence. The personal information that you share with your counselor is confidential, unless you sign a release of information or if the law requires disclosure (e.g., if there is a threat of serious harm to yourself or others, or if there is suspicion of elder or child abuse).

Q. Do I have to wait until a problem is really serious before I call the EAP?

A. No. The philosophy of the EAP, and of the State of California in offering this benefit, is that problems are most effectively handled before they become serious. The key is to get assistance as soon as a problem begins affecting your home life or work performance.

Q. What if I want to see a particular counselor that is not on MBC's panel of providers? Can I go to whomever I want?

A. To get EAP benefits, you have to choose an EAP counselor on MBC's network. We've developed a comprehensive network of thousands of EAP counselors so that you can get the help you need quickly and easily. If you choose to see a counselor outside of our network, you will be responsible for payment.

Q. I need more than the number of sessions that the EAP provides me. Why can't the EAP let me have more sessions?

A. The State of California has approved these different levels of services. The number of sessions that you are eligible for is determined through collective bargaining and the EAP cannot provide additional sessions beyond those approved.

Q. My counselor said she would have to refer me out of the EAP before I have used all my sessions. Why can't I be referred out afterward?

A. The core focus of the EAP is on assisting employees with personal problems. The EAP covers brief counseling and referral services, instead of long-term behavioral healthcare treatment. Counselors can help you clarify a problem, and, if appropriate, provide short-term counseling. But if you would best be helped by longer-term counseling or other community resources, your counselor will refer you out of the EAP.

Q. How can I prepare for my counseling appointment?

A. You can best prepare by taking the following steps:

- Think about why you decided to ask for help at this particular time.
- Consider when the problem began. Often employees seek help because of something stressful or painful that has happened: a death or separation, the anniversary of a difficult event, or a family or school problem.
- Try to recall if/when you have had similar problems in the past. If you have had similar problems, consider how you've tried to cope.
- Think about what you would like to happen as a result of your contact with the EAP (e.g., feeling happier or improving an important relationship).
- What is your goal? When you see your counselor, be as clear as possible about your needs.
- Be sure to keep your appointment. Seeking help takes courage. Some employees become doubtful or uncertain and either cancel or simply don't show up. Once you have decided to seek help, follow through. Consider it an investment in yourself.

If you have additional questions about the State of California Employee Assistance Program (EAP), please ask your human resources representative for toll-free number to access your EAP. The EAP provides confidential counseling and referral assistance for a broad range of personal concerns.

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